

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 14875

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IT

SUBJECT: THE PRESIDENT OF THE CHAMBER OF RESIGNS OVER IN-
DULGENT REMUNERATIVE TREATMENT OF PARLIAMENTARY
EMPLOYEES

SUMMARY: PRESIDENT OF THE CHAMBER, SANDRO PERTINI (PSI) HAS
RESIGNED SUDDENLY IN DEFENSE OF HIS REPUTATION FOR PROBITY OVER
EXPOSES OF INDULGENT REMUNERATIVE PRACTICES IN EFFECT FOR
PARILIAMENTARY EMPLOYEES. HIS RESIGNATION WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY
BE REJECTED. HOWEVER, HIS ACTION HAS FOCUES NATIONAL ATTNETION
ON THE WELL-DESCRIBED "REMUNERATIVE JUNGLE" FOR STATE EMPLOYEES,
AND THE PROBLEM MAY PROVIDE AN INTERESTING TEST OF THE GOVERNMENT'S
WILL
AND CAPACITY TO REFORM ITSELF. THE ISSUE WAS RAISED BY
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER LAMALFA IN THE CONTEXT OF CURRENT CON-
TRACT NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE UNIONS. THERE IS NOW SOME DANGER
THAT COUNTER-CRITICISM OF HIM BY DEFENDERS OF PERTINI COULD
PRECIPATE ANOTHER OF HIS DRAMATIC RESIGNATIONS IN DEFENSE OF HIS
HONOR. END SUMMARY.

1. THE SUDDEN RESIGNATION OF VENERABLE SOCIALIST
CHAMBER PRESIDENT PERTINI OVER INDULGENT SALARY BENEFITS
PAID TO EMPLOYEES OF THE CHAMBER HAS FOCUES PUBLIC
ATTENTION ON THE WELL-DESCRIBED "COMPENSATION JUNGLE"
OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES. THE ISSUE WAS BROUGHT UP ABOUT A
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WEEK AGO BY VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL UGO LAMALFA

THROUGH EDITORIALS IN HIS PARTY'S NEWSPAPER, LA VOCE REPUBBLICANA, AND QUICKLY ESCALATED TO THE PRESENT CLIMAX. LAMALFA'S OPENING CHARGES AGAINST PARLIAMENT FOR PERMITTING THE SITUATION TO DEVELOP WERE FIRST ANSWERED BY PERTINI AND PARLIAMENTARY LEADERS OF ALL OTHER PARTIES, INCLUDING THE PCI, AS EXAGGERATED AND NEEDLESSLY POLEMICAL ATTACKS ON PARLIAMENT. NEVERTHELESS, NO ONE COULD DENY THAT THE PROBLEM EXISTED, AND A SPECIAL COMMITTEE WAS QUICKLY SET UP TO STUDY THE PROBLEM. AT THIS POINT, PERTINI HOPEFULLY DECLARED THE POLEMICS OVER.

2. BY THIS TIME, HOWEVER, LAMALFA WAS FOCUSING HIS ATTENTION ON THE COMPENSATIONS PAID TO THE 1,200 EMPLOYEES OF THE CHAMBER AND SENATE. HE PROFESSED "DISMAY AND INCREDULITY" AT THE REVELATIONS COMING TO HIS ATTENTION, PARTICULARLY THE GRANTING OF EXTRA YEARS TOWARD COMPUTATION OF RETIREMENT TO PARLIAMENTARY EMPLOYEES ON THE OCCASION OF "SOLEMN ANNIVERSARIES" (MUCH AS RULERS GRANT AMNESTIES). OTHER REVELATIONS BEGAN TO APPEAR IN THE PRESS. THE UNIONS DENOUNCED THE CASE OF A HIGH CIVIL SERVANT WHO RETIRED AT 62 WITH 50 YEARS OF RETIREMENT CREDIT (E.G., SEVEN EXTRA YEARS ARE GRANTED TO ALL STATE EMPLOYEES WHO SERVED IN A DANGEROUS ZONE DURING THE WAR); AND ANOTHER CASE OF A DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE SENATE STAFF WHOSE SALARY ROSE FROM APPROXIMATELY DOLS 31 THOUSAND TO DOLS 79 THOUSAND IN HIS LAST YEAR OF EMPLOYMENT, PRESUMABLY FOR PENSION CALCULATION PURPOSES. THOUGH THE LATTER'S PENSION WAS NOT KNOWN, HE WAS ENTITLED TO AND RECEIVED ABOUT A DOLS 230 THOUSAND SEPARATION BONUS.

3. THE PRESSURE AND REVELATIONS SO AFFECTED PERTINI THAT HE WROTE AN EMOTIONAL LETTER TO LAMALFA IN EFFECT ADMITTING FULLY THE JUSTICE OF THE CRITICISM OF THE CHAMBER'S PAY PRACTICES, BUT MAINTAINING THAT THEY HAD PERSISTED DESPITE HIS OPPOSITION DURING HIS TENURE AS PRESIDENT OF THE CHAMBER. PERTINI SEEMED MOST DISTRESSED AT THE THOUGHT OF LOSING HIS MUCH RESPECTED REPUTATION FOR PROBITY (GENERALLY, MUCH DESERVED) IN 50 YEARS OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY. HIS RESIGNATION FOLLOWED A DAY LATER, AND LAMALFA THEN RELEASED THE TEXT OF HIS LETTER

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WITH HIS PERMISSION. PERTINI HAS SINCE BEEN OVERWHELMED WITH TELEGRAMS OF ESTEEM FROM PRESIDENT LEONE AND PRIME MINISTER MORO ON DOWN, COUPLED WITH PLEAS THAT HE WILL RECONSIDER, AND APPEALS THAT HIS RESIGNATION WILL BE REJECTED BY THE CHAMBER. THAT IT WILL BE REJECTED IS A CERTAINTY.

4. COMMENT: ONE SOCIALIST EMBASSY SOURCE HAS COMMENTED

THAT THE SOLE POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PRESENT CONTROVERSY OVER STATE SALARIES LIES IN LAMALFA'S TYPICALLY COLD-BLOODED INTEREST IN HAVING AS MORALLY DEFENSIBLE A CASE AS POSSIBLE FOR HIS APPEAL FOR RESTRAINT VIS-A-VIS THE UNIONS IN CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS NOW UNDER WAY. HOWEVER, PERTINI'S WHOLLY UNEXPECTED GESTURE HAS FOCUES PUBLIC ATTENTION, AS NOTHING ELSE COULD HAVE, ON THE INDULGENT REMUNERATIVE PRACTICES OF THE GOVERNMENT IN THE TREATMENT OF CIVIL SERVANTS, ESPECIALLY IN THE UPPER MIDDLE AND HIGHER CATEGORIES. IT HAS ALSO LEFT EXPOSED SENATE PRESIDENT SPAGNOLLI (DC) WHO, WITH PERTINI, HAD STRENOUSLY DEFENDED PARLIAMENT'S HONOR, EVEN WHILE IMPLICITLY ADMITTING THAT A HIGHERTO WELL-FUNCTIONING COST-OF-LIVING SCALE HAD CAUSED WAGE BENEFIRST TO BALLOON OUT OF PROPORTION WHEN HIGH RATES OF INFLATION SET IN. HOW THE PROBLE IS CONFRONTED AND RESOLVED, NOW THAT EVERYONE IS WATCHING, WILL BE AN INTERESTING TEST OF THE GOVERNMENT'S WILL AND ABILITY TO REFORM ITSELF. MORE IMMEDIATELY, THE EMOTION-LADEN POLEMICS WHICH PERTINI'S RESIGNATION HAS AGGRAVATED COULD ARRY SOME DANGER FOR THE STABILITY OF THE GOVERNMENT ITSELF. THE DEFENSE OF PERTINI, IN WHICH PEOPLE FROM ALL POLITICAL PARTIES FARE CHIMING IN, IS ACCOMPANIED BY LEFT-CRITICSIM OF LAMALFA AS THE VILLAIN. THE LEFT CHARGES THAT LAMALFA'S CRITICISM OF PARLIAMENTARY EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES WAS SIMPLY A PLOY TO COUNTER UNION DEMANDS FOR OTHER STATE EMPLOYEES (SEE SEPTEL). IN REACTION, IT IS NOT BEYOND THE REALM OF POSSIBILITY THAT LAMALFA, AS HE HAS DONE IN THE PAST, WILL IN TURN FEEL OBLIGATED TO PROTECT HIS HONOR WITH ANOTHER DRAMATIC RESIGNATION.VOLPE

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